

ATLANTIS! used to JUST RULE! DICK TOGO! does the fattest of fat sentons! SUGAMOTO! the lil Michinoku Pro guy! and other stuff to yammer about!

Howdy!

WELCOME TO DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #39! It was a fair-to-middlin week of tape viewing as I decided to [Gosh DurniT!] watch ALL those freakin tapes I ain't watched yet and it's easiest if you go in numerical order. Since me and Loreface are trying to send each other exact replicas of each others collections (I WISH! Mike's vast tapelist smokes mine like a cheap cigar. And you wonder why he is so thorough and knowledgable.) I decided to get cracking on the zillion or so WHOMP ASS tapes he has sent me. I also saw some big batches of Lucha as I had a Memorial Day tape-watching wiseacre-comment- crackin Cool-Wrestling periodicals-viewing thang with Tim at his "24-7 Land Of The Lady Love" bachelor pad in the swanky West End.:) I forced him to watch a big batch of Black Warrior and then we watched some cool SWS with Bestia Salvaje versus Asai in an ass-stomping highspot freakout. We also watched an Orient Express match with AMAZINGLY roided out Paul Diamond. I can't remember who they wrestled. HELL! It was a holiday for Pete's Sake! WOO-HOO!
MICHINOKU PRO-1/14/97- on Samurai TV, Sapporo Nakajima Sports Center

(MIKE!!!!)

This was quite the mixed bag. The good stuff is FRICKIN GREAT and the bad stuff is relatively bad. It starts with a match tagging Yakushiji with a fellow-scrawny guy, Sugamoto- who I had never seen before I don't believe- up against the crappy Wellington Wilkins III (Phil's former fave.:)) and the underrated Hoshikawa. Hoshikawa is the very BattlARTSesque guy in MP who is also pretty fair at the MP style. He kicks harder than he highflies and I'm starting to dig him. Sugamoto was spunky and Yakushiji was in the weird role as elder partner so he slaps Sugamoto in the head when Sugamoto wants to be a pansy and tag out too soon. This match is kinda jerky, not really hitting its stride at full speed- though it had a lot of nice spots. Sugamoto was impressive for a rookie and Yakushiji did his mid-grade Rey Misterio Jr spots. Wilkins did a cool (I'm not kidding) snap mare where he twists Sugamoto's head. Hoshikawa hit lots of cool suplexes and kicked really hard. Not bad, didn't change my life or anything. A BattARTS match follows and its a good one- so it was really good- since with BattlARTS its really good or mindnumbingly bad. And Ikeda is SO cool now. Daisuke Ikeda and Takeshi Ono take on Yuki Ishikawa and Alexander Otsuka. Ono is right behind Ikeda and Minoru as the really good wrestlers to watch in BattlARTS. He's very slender and VERY graceful. He works as stiff as someone twice his size so he is kinda compelling to watch. This match was the usual mishmash of styles with this being heavy on the matwork and it also ventured into whacky brawling into the stands, complete with stiff kicks into the first couple of rows. Ikeda sets the tone as he and Ishikawa take turns working for leg submissions. Otsuka and Ishikawa kinda halfway work on the leg of Ikeda but tend to wander to other strategies whenever the match calls for a cool suplex to break up the matwork. Otsuka is the least of these guys from a stiffness and suplex standpoint, but he sells the best of anyone in BattlARTS and has a weird extra-pro-style approach that is great at counterpointing the more overwhelming matwork sequences and he is the one who makes Ono's and Ikeda's kicks look spectacular. This was good because it was just

enough stiffness added to just enough pro style psychology which all built to a cool ending with Otsuka's credible selling of some CHOICE stiff kicks. AN ESOTERIC TREAT!:) Next up was the Funaki/Naniwa match that was shown (in edited form I'm sure) on Champ Forum. This match was great! I can't believe that Naniwa is just twenty years old and can do matches as solid as this. Both of these guys are just good wrestlers who don't do a lot of spectacular moves. Lorefice mentioned in Quebrada about Funaki selling the knee inconsistently at different points in the match and that's true- especially after Naniwa spends the first five minutes of the match bustin his knee up. I can't remember if this match preceded or came after the match where Funaki gets bum-rushed by all of the Sasuke Wusses outside the ring and they REALLY work on his knee (the one where the rudos carry him to the back and race back into the ring). I'm thinking that that was the first 10-man rematch (the best of the series I'd say) so this attack by Naniwa would make sense since it built upon that point of psychology from a previous match in the feud and it is a valid criticism that Funaki should have been more aware how he was selling the worked-on knee. Other than that, this match kicked ass. I wish they would pursue this feud more, though I guess its water under the bridge four months later. These two are made for each other like Super Delfin and Shiryu are.

I wasn't prepared for MOTEGI vs SHINZAKI. Who would be? This didn't suck as much as you would think. Well. It sucked about as much as any Shinzaki match sucks, but it wasn't Shinzaki sucking against somebody who is really good, so it doesn't piss off the discerning wrestling viewer like Shinzaki going over Shiryu does. It was like Ice Train going over JL as opposed to Ice Train going over LaParka. Plus it was mercifully short.

TigerKing vs TAKA I'd seen before also, but I didn't want to see it again. So I FF.

The Main Event was Hamada/ Sasuke/ Super Delfin vs Dick Togo/ Men's Teioh/ Shiryu and was it grand! This was a match where Shiryu got to do a lot of offense and Togo was the quiet one. Shiryu is great with Sasuke, selling his aerial moves like a mofo and when Shiryu is in with Super Delfin its MAGIC. He hits the fun-filled Shiryu somersault tope! Sasuke is a real bad-ass in this taking it outside and kicking ass in a Smokey Mountain kinda way. Togo is up to the task doing a Sabu move off a chair onto a table (maybe not:)). There are as many highlights as there are moves in this match. The ending is great and I'M GONNA GIVE IT AWAY! DIVERT YOUR EYES IF YOU ARE STILL EXPECTING THIS TAPE!!

Sasuke gets Doomsday Deviced, then Teioh DDT'd, Then Shiryu hits a flying cross body block, then Teioh hits a splash and then TOGO hits a SENTON HALFWAY ACROSS THE RING. I freaked out and partied. AWESOME! GO GIT IT!

UWA TV from Galavision (2/90; 4/90)

(MIKE!!!)

This was all from 1990 and it had the guys I had heard were good, but had only seen while they had already reached Lucha Codgerdom. The guy who I figured would rule and who really did rule was Atlantis. Atlantis is one of my faves of the old guys now, but he was REALLY

state-of-the-art in 1990. He was Misterioesque in his flashiness- agile, acrobatic, spectacular yet still able to take it to the mat like he relies on now that his knees are gone. El Dandy was another guy who is real sketchy now who was spectacular then. I watched a singles match on this tape between him and Angel Azteca that was really solid, mixing great highspots with tricked-out lucha mat wrestling. I can see a lot of stuff that is lost now in Lucha Libre, in that these guys worked ten times looser than their present-day lucha descendents but they also had a better grasp of mat wrestling that the young punks of Lucha have and who aree having to regain it by watching their Japanese counterparts. I don't understand why these old guys don't do more of that now as opposed to slapping each other a lot like they do now. I dunno. The big surprise for me was the coolness of Pirata Morgan- GOLLY! what a bump machine. I've only seen a few of his latter day matches and he can barely move now. Back in 1990 he was about as intense as you can get, doing bumps like Psicosis would do now (without all the twisting:)) He was also a great imposing rudo who could pull off looking like a legit badass- PLUS! of the four hours I watched, he took the two fattest Jerry Estrada bumps and was posted the hardest twice. Another neat thing on this tape is a match which was four stiffs (well, Octagon wasn't a stiff back then) teaming with Asai and Canelo Casas. It was ginchy seeing Ultimo Dragon without a mask and really flying around mixing it up with the thirteen year-old (okay maybe 18) Heavy Metal. And the Jerry Estrada vs Satanico hair vs hair match had the best Satanico tope I've ever seen. Okay it's the only Satanico tope I've ever seen, but it still ROCKED!:)

NEXT WEEK: KAORU! KAORU! KAORU! A really weird Michinoku Pro Champ Forum! LUCHA! LUCHA LUCHA LIBRE!!! WOO-HOO!

CHEETAH~!

Dean Rasmussen, Dean Rasmussen, Digging Dick TOGO since the day he was born.